

AXXS 2002
Achieving Xcellence in Science: Role of Professional Societies in
Advancing Women in Sciences
Highlights from the Proceedings of a Workshop

AXXS Updated Goals/Next Steps

- Define criteria for excellence in clinical research
- Seek Endorsement of the criteria by academic health centers so they can be used as valid criteria for promotion and tenures
- Note: Societies would play a unique role, because each specialty would have to develop its own criteria of excellence in their area
- Encourage each society, with assistance from AXXS, to put on leadership programs in the context of the national society meeting or research training programs
- Encourage the individual professional societies to collaborate with the NIH and the private sector for joint funding. When the funding from a K award (NIH training) grants is not enough, make it allowable for the professional society to add its particular grant and not exclude people they already have another form of funding
- Pursue the possibility that through AXXS a pool of funding could be established for the initiatives just outlined

Primary Obstacles

- Clinical research is generally viewed as second-class citizens within institutions and societies. No reward readily apparent for this career
- Financial issues and lifestyle issues are obstacles: loan repayment, salary, and revenue availability
- Balancing life and professionals development
- Women do not feel they are role models due to her current job level. Women need to believe they are role models regardless of level
- Lack of access to information and grantsmanship channel

What is different about the clinical research environment?

1. Longer length of time and cost to complete clinical research training
2. Minimal to no focus on research, training, or mentorship or experience in research
3. Skill set: Lack of basic training in research methodology, statistics, and many other areas that allow a researcher to succeed.
4. Appropriate clinical review: At the NIH, programs such as the Debt forgiveness programs, financial support for mentors is a good first response to the differences. NIH further implemented reviews of clinical research to ensure that clinical gets a fair opportunity in its reviews rather than being overseen by a review panels of a majority of basic scientists and a token clinical researcher

Quote from a young woman completing an endocrinology fellowship: “Through all my years of medical school and residency, no one ever mentioned or spoke of the possibility of a research career. I was never exposed to it, never thought of it.”

Role of Societies

- Agents for the development and advancement of clinical investigators
- Nominate women for achievement and research awards
- Change editorial boards to reflect membership
- Placing women as committee and section chairs
- Increased Societal interaction and collaboration

Development of AXXS 1999 to AXXS 2002

Launched 14 different initiatives within four themes

- 1) Leadership, visibility, and recognition of women
- 2) Mentoring and networking
- 3) Effective practice
- 4) Oversight, tracking, and accountability

Leadership, visibility, and recognition of women

- Increase the number of women, but this increase alone does not change the fundamental playing field. This gives rise to the Fourth Strategy
- Fourth strategy: Assess and revise the work culture
- Part of the purpose of AXXS: Create an umbrella organization to examine strategically ways to change the culture of scientific societies so that women's contributions will be more valued

Think Strategically

- Identify current culture/mindset
- Take advantage of the current culture and mindset: It is not just the “old boys network” anymore
- Capitalize on current culture and mindset: remind those in leadership positions that they will be missing opportunities to enrich their own societies, their own institutions, if they do not capitalize on the women in science.
- Change the current climate
 - Look at the definition of academic success in the appointment, promotion, and tenure process
 - Value mentoring and recognize it as a very important part of academic success
 - Look at the definition of scholarship, emphasizing and developing better metrics to incorporate and reward those who engage in collaborative and clinical research

Act Strategically

- Collect better data on clinical research: A survey might be undertaken with the lead of AXXS to determine the demographics of societies and whether the leadership and staff reflect their memberships
- Look at some of the other equity issues such as salary: Possibly starting with American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC), which does comprehensive salary surveys each year
- Collect hard data on recruitment versus retention costs to suggest just how cost saving retention is. Promote a strategy of internal recruitment of women as well as external recruitment of women
- Once data is available, disseminate the data with assistance of societies to department chairs, and the society memberships.

Mentoring and networking

- Develop AXXS website as a resource for women in science who are searching for publications and Web links (Ongoing)
- Success Marker: 300 hits per day on the website
- Use the website as a clearinghouse for information on women, science, and strategies for success
- Develop effective practices clearinghouse- organizational practices to advance the career of women in science

Action Steps

- Facilitate the use of mentorship programs and establish a mentorship award (cash award)
- Provide mechanism for interaction between mid and senior-level women- maintain network as ongoing
- Selection of mentor(s)
 1. Definition
 2. Evaluation
 3. Rewards

Oversight, tracking, and accountability

- Requires an oversight organization
- Need an umbrella organization to address primary leadership and be inclusive of all sciences and technology
- Establish a report card on the status of women in science and engineering
- Criteria for promotion and tenure

Need Data

- Recruitment versus retention cost
- Membership information (leadership, staff, salary)
- Need models (lists, programs, practices)
 - Career development (financial, academic, scholarship)

- Mentoring (awards, national recognition)
- Recruiting and advancing (awards, grants)

Solutions

- Infrastructure: Flexible work schedule, social support for child rearing and child-care, administrative support, space issues. Recognize that local institutions (such as universities, hospitals, and research center), societies (such as AAMC), and national institutions (such as the National Institute of Health) can all put forth the arguments required to instill the flexibility needed in the system
 - Time
 - Social support
 - Administrative
- Flexibility at all levels for both genders
 - Institutes
 - Societies
 - National/Societal
- Mentoring all professional levels: Provide a mechanism for ongoing interaction between mid-level and senior-level women through society meetings and by societies meetings and by societies working together to share information
- Role Models
 - Seek role models of successful women who have managed to balance families and successful careers and make them highly visible
 - Need to constantly seek new role models to avoid overburdening a few people
 - Leadership at all levels (institution, societal, national)

Proposed Pathway

Key Partners

- NIH (\$\$)
- Academic Institution
- Professional Society

What can be done?

Mentoring programs: Determine awards and reward societies that are developing such programs. Provide financial rewards to the mentor. Institutionalize the accountability and value of mentorship.

Example: The American Society of Hematology awards big grants for the mentee in which some of the evaluation criteria are related to the mentoring skills involved. Now the society is working toward rewarding the mentor financially.

Fiscal models: Publicize fiscal models that support retention of staff, comparing the cost of attrition with that of training new staff. Specific programs to highlight include debt forgiveness programs, staff reentry programs, and flexible arrangements. Present these issues as cutting across disciplines to funding agencies and Congress.

Career development: Develop training programs that cover categories including financial, academic, scholarship, grant writing workshops, conflict management, negotiation skills, and full career development workshops

Recruitment and Advancement: Awards from national societies might be used to award department chairs or other leaders for appropriately recruiting and advancing women in science